

The Tree Commission Meeting for the City of New Castle took place on May 3, 2010 at 5:30 p.m. in the City of New Castle's Town Hall.

Members Present: Chip Patterson, Chairperson
Erv Thatcher
Toby Hagerott*
John Lloyd
Mark Miller
Nancy Coning

Members Absent: Susan Keyser, Co-Chairperson
Fran Peden
Tom Truman

*Reappointment pending in City Council.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Patterson at 5:30 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Approval of Minutes – A minor text correction was noted in the April minutes.

Mr. Lloyd made a motion to approve the March minutes and April minutes as corrected. Ms. Coning seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

MEMBERS REPORT

Erv Thatcher – Updating his report from last month, he is unsure if the maple tree on Delaware Street (Methodist graveyard) has been addressed; low-lying branches on trees at 16 and 36 West Fifth Street have been trimmed back but 20 West Fifth Street has not yet been addressed. (*Brief discussion.*) The trees (two locust) on Battery Park have not been removed yet but Bob Rizzardi will handle removal. Crews have tried twice to address trimming a tree on Harmony Street but a vehicle is blocking access to the tree. (*Discussion followed about circumstances with 'no parking' designation in the City.*)

Nancy Coning – There is a tree on Fourth Street near her home that continuously creaks badly and limbs fall out. She would like the tree to be removed.

Toby Hagerott – He inquired how often the Tree Commission looks at other areas of New Castle beyond the downtown area. Mr. Patterson said at one time this body had areas they were responsible for keeping track of and it is something we could look at again. Messrs. Thatcher and Lloyd are good about finding and reporting tree problems throughout the City.

John Lloyd – Near the Banks Building there is an old iron fence that has cedars growing up beside it. There are volunteer scrub trees underneath the cedars that are damaging the fence and jeopardizing the sea wall. He showed photos of the area and recommended removing the scrub trees. Mr. Patterson will discuss removal of the low-lying scrub trees with Ms. Cathie Thomas to get approval for removal of the scrub trees. (*Additional discussion followed.*)

He reported two (2) pin oaks he believes should be removed. One is in Dobbinsville in the park by the playground in the area of 627/629 Clymer Street that is mostly dead. The other is on Route 9 and Harmony Street and is mostly dead in the top.

Mr. Miller made a motion to remove both the pin oaks as reported by Mr. Lloyd. Mr. Thatcher seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously to remove both pin oaks.

Mark Miller – He referenced an email concerning this body's meeting with the Outreach Program. Mr. Patterson reminded that Beverly Ross of the Trustees said they did not want a public meeting; rather, they felt a representative group from the Tree Commission could meet with them to describe what we do. The Tree Commission is asking the Outreach Program to return to the full body of the Trustees and ask them to conduct another vote concerning funding of the Tree Commission. The Trustees' final meeting for the summer is in June.

Discussion turned to who would be best to represent the Tree Commission. Mr. Miller is a long-standing member and familiar with this body's history and that would be helpful. Mr. Thatcher will join Mr. Miller. Mr. Thatcher can provide valuable information on City-provided services relating to trees versus what the Tree Commission does. The City crews have not received all the credit they deserve for the work that they do. (Ex.-sweeping of leaves, unclogging storm drains, removing small branches and cleaning streets, chipping and mulching.) Ms. Keyser will also be approached to join Messrs. Miller and Thatcher. Mr. Patterson stated that maintaining the trees in New Castle is the responsibility of multiple groups. It's a combination of the Trustees, the City, Tree Commission and Municipal Services. The Tree Commission believes the role of the Trustees is to provide funding to allow the Tree Commission to do new plantings and pruning and such when the City cannot handle. The City does not have the expertise, training and special equipment to handle the day-to-day needs in the City. (*Discussion followed.*)

The City received \$5,000 as a green grant rather than provide funding to this body. It is understandable that Trustees' funding is being reduced as a result of the poor economy, but their stand is more of a shift in position. Trustees' funding has given the Tree Commission independence from political pressures. There is a tree ordinance in place in the City that the City will either have to revoke and do away with the Tree Commission or fund the Tree Commission. The tree ordinance was set up so that if we did not receive funding from the Trustees we would be part of the budgeting process with the City. Mr. Miller stated that the Trustees are stewards of the common land and by not funding the Tree Commission we cannot provide stewardship for the trees. Mr. Lloyd added emphasis should be put on safety and lawsuits that can result from unsafe trees causing property damage and/or bodily harm. Mr. Hagerott asked who homeowners go to for tree-related issues if there is no Tree Commission. (*Discussion ensued.*) Mr. Patterson noted that the Trustees, by the state legislature, are the Battery Park Committee and in charge of City parks.

The meeting has not yet been scheduled. Ms. Coning suggested Commission members get together and discuss our approach before meeting with either the full Trustees or the Outreach Program Committee.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A photo was shown of a tree that is half dead in its top and has been pruned in the past but now should be removed. It is located in front of the residences of Appleby and Cooch.

On Tremont Street there is a large tree with hollow spots throughout and two (2) heavy leaders leaning toward the house. There is also a cavity in the main trunk. Mr. Lloyd recommended removal of the tree.

Mr. Patterson noted a tree on Fourth Street that has been pruned back so far that there isn't much left of the tree and it should be removed.

Mr. Miller made a motion to remove all of the trees noted in the Chairman's Report along with the tree noted in Ms. Coning's report. Ms. Coning seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote to remove the aforementioned trees.

Mr. Patterson said he has applications from the State for planting and maintenance monies. We could request monies for the Spring planting. Mr. Miller said he would work on the applications. They are due by 7/15/10. Three (3) bids are required along with a site plan. Ms. Keyser can provide information on where the trees on the Spring planting list are located.

It was reported that Henry Poole from State Forestry has informed that the elm tree on Battery Park was hit by lightning. He did not see any disease in the tree.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved and the meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Turner
Stenographer